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ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH POLICY & INSPIRING LEADERSHIP

## AB 1340: Continuing Medical Education on Mental Health Fact Sheet

### **SUMMARY**

This bill would establish an optional continuing medical education (CME) training on mental health issues in a primary care setting for medical professionals that are required to take CME's as part of their license renewal process.

### **BACKGROUND**

The requirement for physicians to participate in Continuing Medical Education (CME) was established to create the most competent licensing population possible and to enhance consumer protection. Under California law, physicians and surgeons must complete at least 50 hours of approved CME during each biennial renewal cycle.

In the era of integrated health care, it is imperative that all medical professionals are trained in recognizing the early signs of mental health issue in children and young adults. This is especially important for Pediatricians and general practitioners to ensure they are fully supported in identifying mental health concerns and appropriately treating them. In fact, in the U.S., approximately 60 percent of mental health care visits are directed to a primary care physician. Considering that 50 percent of all cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and by age 24 the rate is 75 percent, the need to equip physicians with the tools and knowledge to meet the demands of these young people is paramount.

The average length of untreated mental illness in children and youth is from the onset of mental health symptoms is 8-10 years. In these long years, the severity of the condition can

dramatically worsen and cause undue stress and strife for the child, their family, their education, and often their future. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the suicide rate among U.S. middle school-aged kids between ages 10 and 14 is increasing. The CDC also found that for the first time, more kids in that age range have died by suicide than by car accidents.

Pediatricians and general practitioners need to be supported in their work and provided with robust evidence based practices and training around early intervention for mental health issues in their patients.

### **SOLUTION**

Direct the California Medical Board to establish a Continuing Medical Education (CME) training on early identification and treatment of mental health issues. This optional CME training would be offered to all practicing physicians and other qualifying medical professionals. The training would focus on medical practitioners that treat children and youth on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of an emerging or existing mental health condition and how to provide or refer that young person to appropriate care and treatment.

This bill would include within the Business & Professions Code list of criteria that meets CME standards a reference to the integration of mental and physical health.